

610 Indiana Avenue, NW (Commercial Building)  
Washington  
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-508

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DC,  
WASH,  
318-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Situated on the western half of Lot 812, this building forms part of a Nineteenth Century row of commercial structures. Its dimensions are approximately 18' wide by 49' long. It stands three stories high and has a flat roof. Its structural system is typical of small commercial structures at the time and very straightforward; masonry party and bearing walls supporting a wooden floor structure and a basically flat roof, sloping slightly to the south.

The building has an ell at the rear, leaving a courtyard between it and the adjacent neighbor to the east.

The street elevation features four piers at ground level which sustain a flat brick wall. Three window bays occur on each of the upper two floors. The facade has applied nutal ornaments characteristic of the Victorian Italianate style.

The basement is reached by means of a deteriorated straight run wooden stair which is located along the east party wall of the building. The basement floor is communicated with the adjacent building, 608 Indiana Avenue through an opening in the east party wall. The basement extends under the front portion of the building and has a brick bearing wall which runs north-south, dividing this area into two rooms. The western room has a fireplace and a door at the front of the room, leading to vault space under the sidewalk. The walls and ceiling are plaster, directly applied to wood lath. The floor is concrete.

The first floor is open in plan with one large room across the front of the building. There is a small room in the back. The first floor is communicated with the adjacent building through an opening in the east party wall. The finishes on the main level consist of random-width plank floors, plastered walls and pressed metal tile ceiling. Along the east party wall a half turn stairway with bold newel posts communicates all floors. Access to the upper level of the ell at the rear occurs at the landing between the first and second floor.

The second and third floors have undergone little alteration. All window and door trim is original and of a very simple style. The finishes of the second and third floor are random width plank floors covered in places with linoleum. Plaster is directly applied to masonry party walls, to wood lath on stud partition and ceilings.

On the second floor there is a large room in the front with a fire-

place on the west wall which is sealed. It has a simple Neo-Classical mantle. There is no hearth. There is a smaller room at the back which has a fireplace with a matching simple Neo-Classical mantle. This fireplace is sealed up and there is a hearth. There are two old hanging light fixtures which are typical of the period. There is a bath and an additional room in the attached ell.

The third floor is shallower and consists of two rooms in the front, and a bath and one room in the back.

#### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

This three-story building is representative of Nineteenth Century commercial structures in the downtown area. Its simple, three-bay facade is embellished with metal window hoods and roof entablature that give it a simple elegance.

The storefront and entryway assembly, although apparently not original to the building, appear to be early Twentieth Century and remain in a relatively unaltered condition. It is this integral traditional quality of the design that renders the structure significant in a district that is marked by radically-altered buildings.

In addition, the structure forms part of an outstanding contiguous row of similar structures, all of which have managed to retain a strong and integral traditional character.

Since the ornamentation is surface-applied, it may have been a stylistic remodeling of an earlier building. No documentation exists about original construction. The 1870 tax assessment, however, shows a significant jump from previous taxation amounts.

The interior of this building illustrates a typical 19th Century approach to integrating domestic living with commercial space. There have been few alterations to this building in the 20th Century, so that we have an accurate picture of traditional mixed use in Washington .

#### SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

The simple facade features Victorian Italianate ornamentation applied to the wall plane. This consists of metal hoods and sills on the second and third floor windows; and also metal bracketed cornice.

At sidewalk level, four wood-clad piers establish three a-b-c bays. The western bay presents a pair of glazed paneled doors with corresponding segmental-arched transom lite above. The eastern bay has a single glazed panel door. The wider central bay features a storefront on a paneled metal base and a molded metal cornice. Again, transom lites recessed from the facade plane occur above. The entire composition is topped by a denticulated wood cornice that projects at the level of the second floor.

At the second and third floors, the three bays are equally spaced. The metal molded sills appear to rest on small scrolled brackets at each end. The heads on the square headed fenestration have hoods that are expressed as flat-top arches consisting of a bold reeded torus that on each side rests on metal corbels. On the third floor the corbels have a bold foliage design. Those on the third floor are smaller and carry a fluted motif.

The window sash are wood double-hung and present four over four lites. The vertical muntins on the sash are considerably thicker than the horizontal ones.

The roof entablature has an unadorned frieze. It is modulated into three bays by tall metal brackets with scroll designs. On each bay occur four equidistant modillions that reiterate the scroll motif. Brackets and modillions visually sustain a projecting cornice of standard classical design.